NUMB. LXXVII.

THE PLAIN DEALER.

Miſce ſtultitiam Conſiliis brevem. HOR.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14. 1724.

I Remember a Paſſage, in ſome *Eaſtern* Writer, which carries a ſharp, and inſtructive, Moral. — An *Emir*, of great Sanctity, had a Cuſtom, every Night, to call his Family together, that they might ſit round him, with due Gravity, to hear his Son read ſome Chapter of the *Alcoran*, which the Father would take Pleaſure in opening, and enlarging on, to his Domeſtick Congregation. It happened, one Night, that, in the midſt of the Sermon, the whole Audience *fell aſleep*; except the Preacher, and his Son: which laſt, aſſoon as he obſerv'd it, interrupted his Father, with this Remark: — *See Sir, the Fruits of your Good Purpoſe! There is not one, of them All, but ſleeps, as ſoundly, as if God's Word deſerv'd no Reverence!* — The *Emir* look'd round the Company, and, ſhutting up his *Spectacles*, in the Book, againſt a fitter Opportunity, drew his Diſcourſe to a Concluſion, with this Reply, to his Son's Intelligence — *You had, yourſelf, been better employ'd, in adding One to the Number of theſe Sleepers, than in waking, not ſo much to correct your own Faults, as to obſerve the Faults of Others!*

I receiv'd a Letter, the other Day, which brought this Story to my Remembrance, and is one Proof, among many, how difficult a Province he undertakes, who aſſumes the Office of a *PLAIN-DEALER*, at a Time, when People are ſo *vigorous*, in the Cenſures, which they make *Themſelves*; and ſo *languid*, in their Approbation of Thoſe, which others make, with the ſame Liberty!

The Author of this Letter is, however, ſo kind, as to let me know, " He is one of my *Beſt Friends*; he " will not, therefore, inſiſt on my Diſingenuity, to " *fall foul of* — a ſingle Sentence, — in one of my " late Papers; and, *dwell on one Error*, in a volumi- " nous Author: But he is ſo good as to be in Pain for " my *Veracity*; having carefully (he ſays) examin'd " every ſingle Paragraph of *Mr.* Trapp's *Preface to* " *his Tranſlation of Virgil*, and not being able to diſ- " cover, what I charge him with. — He cloſes all, " with a Hint, that he writes, in Vindication of that " worthy and Reverend, Author; and would not " have Offence taken *at every Trifle*.

The *VERACITY* of the *PLAIN-DEALER* being the Side he will be ſure to be moſt defenſible on, it was unskilfully done, for a *Lover of the Muſes*, as my Correſpondent ſubſcribes himſelf, to bring on his Attack, ſo raſhly, on that Quarter. — He ought, firſt, to have been very careful, and confirm'd, in his *Diſcoveries*. — But, to remove the *Cloud* from his Sight, if he pleaſes to turn to Page 382, of the firſt Volume of the mention'd Tranſlation; in an *Eſſay, on moving the Paſſions*, previous to the Remarks on the 4th, Book, he will find a Paragraph ended thus, — *We have not — as — yet — indeed — completed the Explication, propos'd: — For ſomething — more — ſtill — remains — behind.* — If this differs from what it appear'd in my Paper, it is only by being a little *worſe* than I made it.

Thus much, to the *Charge*, in that only Part, which carried any *Appearance* of Reaſon with it. — The other Articles have no Weight, at all, but from the Regard that is due to a *miſtaken Good-Nature*; which has miſled the Gentleman, whoever he was, to apprehend, as a *Trifle*, an Error of the firſt Magnitude, in Writing. — It is, certainly, the Buſineſs, and the *Aim*, of every Author, to *explain*, and *illuſtrate*, his Argument: But this tedious Redundance obſcures, and perplexes it. — Where a Man ſhould *imprint* Idea's, he diſtracts and *erazes* them: And, inſtead of awakening the Paſſions, affects the Spirits with Drowſineſs. — Such a *TRIFLE* is this Fault, which my Correſpondent is for paſſing over, with ſo tender-hearted a Blindneſs!

[Price Two-Pence.]

The

The cenſur'd Paſſage, then, is no Error, of ſuch *ſmall Importance*, as the Animadvertor had thought fit to imagine; but he falls, next, into another Miſtake, of conſidering it, as a Place, pick'd out, by the Inquiſition of a malicious Eye: Whereas (if he had been as attentive to the *Argument*, of the Paper, where he found that Cenſure, as he was to the *Cenſure Itſelf*) nothing would have been more eaſy, than to have obſerv'd *Numbers, of the ſame Kind* of *Amplifications*, which might, with equal Effect, have been borrow'd from that Work: And, thence, he muſt have drawn this natural and obvious Concluſion — That *one Error, only, was dwelt on*, not becauſe it was all that could be found, but becauſe it was all, that could be admitted in that Paper.

As to the *Worthineſs*, or *Reverence*, of the Author, the Letter-Writer himſelf can wiſh no leſs Ill to him, than the *PLAIN-DEALER* does. But this is a Matter, intirely out of the Queſtion. The *Perſon* has nothing to do, where what he has *written*, and *publiſhed*, is the Ground of the Argument. — For a *Friend*, Partiality is *Weakneſs*: And, againſt an *Enemy*, it is *Baſeneſs*. The Merit of a Cauſe lies above the Level of ſuch low Motives; and they, who would reach it, as they ought, muſt be lifted, in their Attempt, between *Juſtice*, and *Reſolution*. — There is nothing, which the *PLAINDEALER* has a ſincerer Deteſtation of, than Perſonal Reproach or Defamation: But then, on the other ſide, he, who dares not ſpeak out, openly, whenever Occaſion offers itſelf, concerning the Miſcarriages of the Greateſt Men, or the Virtues of the moſt Unproſperous, has a Soul, below the Duties, of one, who *writes, that he may deſerve Reading*.

But, to make a Tranſition to a Subject, which I have, for ſome Time (in vain) been expecting an Opportunity to *reſume*, with a Spirit leſs *ludicrous*, than That, in which I touch'd it, not long ſince: I am rais'd, to ſuch a Height of Wonder, by the triumphant *Poſture*, in which the *Wit* of this Generation is viſible, almoſt every Night, at one, or other of our Theatres, in the Genius of our Actors *Limbs*, that there is nothing, which I cannot promiſe myſelf, from the *mimic* Readineſs of their *Elaſtick Capacity*; and the Humour, which the Town is in, of *liſtning*, to the *Voice*, of their *Muſcles!*

I have noted, for this Reaſon, what I diſcovered, not without due Tranſport, as I was peruſing a certain *Venerable HIGH-GERMAN* Compiler, (*CAMERARIUS his Hiſtorical Meditations!*) — It is a new, and unbroken *Mine*, of *Theatrical Treaſure*! which I ſhall recommend, with the ſtronger Hope, to the Contention of our Rival Stages, becauſe, the never-to-be-forgotten, the Triumphant *FAUSTUS HIMSELF* was of Happy *High-German* Original!

" I have, oftentimes, ſays this Grave and Authen-
" tick Sage! (for I reverence him too much to vary,
" a Word, from his Text) *ſeen, with wondering*, in
" the Prince of *Bamberg* his Court, a certain Pea-
" ſant of *Germany*, nouriſhed, and brought up, as
" himſelf avouched, in the Mountains, *among Beaſts*;
" who was ſo active, and nimble, of his Body, that
" all that ſaw him were *aſtounded*, and thought he uſed
" *Enchantment*, which, yet, *I do not, eaſily, think,*
" *he did!* — And that, which was moſt admirable in
" him was, That he ſhewed his Agility, *not ſtanding,*
" *but walking upon his Hands, and his Feet, prone and*
" *flat-backed, like a Dog, or a Cat!*

" In that ſame Court, was a *Dwarf*, who would
" *get up, upon* this Peaſant, as upon a Horſe; mak-
" ing him to turn, and wind, all manner of Ways,
" as a Rider would do a *Spaniſh Genet*; But, when
" the *Peaſant liſted*, he would, eaſily, *throw his Dwarf*,
" for all that ever he could do to ſit faſt. — Some-
" times he was *baited*, with *very mighty Maſtives*, and
" with *Engliſh Dogs*, that the Prince had: And, by a
" certain *Barking*, which he counterfeited naturally;
" and a *furious ſnarling, like a Dog*, would give them
" the Chaſe, and make them run apace, out of the
" Hall. — That done, he would ſet himſelf to *leap*,
" upon his Hands, and Feet, forwards, and back-
" wards, with a *Nimbleneſs incredible*! and would
" *ſcramble up, by the Coines*, towards the Roof of the
" Hall, faſter than an *Ape* could do! albeit, other-
" wiſe, he was a *ruſtical Fellow, heavy*, and of a *groſs*
" *making*.

" I ſaw him twice, as I was at the Prince's Ta-
" ble (after he had thrown his Dwarf, and driven
" away all the Dogs that were in the Room) leap up-
" on the Shoulders of one of the Gueſts, and thence
" upon the Table, without overturning *Diſh*, or *Cup*:
" And, then, caſt himſelf with ſuch a *Spring* upon the
" Floor, that one would have ſaid, *It* had been a
" *Squirrel*, or ſome *wild Cat*. — He did uſe to skip as
" faſt upon the Tops of Towers, and of Houſes,
" built Point-wiſe, as our Houſe-Cats would do:
" And ſo many other *PARTS* of a *Cat*, and an
" *Ape*, *HE PLAYED*, that *his Tricks were the*
" *Talk, and the Wonder of all Men!*

I was ſo pleas'd with this Fancy, that I could not forbear communicating it, for the Future Entertainment of our *People of Faſhion*: And I am ſo firmly convinc'd of the imitative Spirit, and Genius of the Hoſtile *Harlequins* of the *Two, Comic, Houſes*, that I queſtion not, in the leaſt, but, by the ſecond Week, after *Chriſtmas*, we ſhall ſee a Dozen, or two, of Bull-Dogs round the Tail of *Shepherd*, on *Drury-Lane Stage*, without being able to *bite him*, while he *curvets* and *barks* with his *Back up*, and wheels ſafe, in *their Center*; — And *Mr. LUN*, at the other Houſe, crawling up the Edge of one of his Scenes, and *ſticking to the Roof, like a Spider* over the Heads of a *ſhouting Pit*! where he will *ſpin* himſelf into their good Graces, 'till their Necks are half broke, with the *Sublimity* of their Entertainment!

Printed for J. ROBERTS, in *Warwick-Lane*:
Where Compleat SETTS may be had.